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**Jesus' Use of Current Proverbs.**

Many of the sayings of Jesus can only become intelligible and significant when their proverbial character is recognized and understood, says Rev. David Smith in the *Expositor* for December. Jesus made use of these familiar proverbs in order that his teaching might be more readily appreciated by the common people. Thus, for example, when he says, "It is yet four months and the harvest cometh," he is not making a chronological statement as to the time of his speaking, but is using a proverb which states the truth that results mature slowly. The case of the woman at the well was, however, an exception, since here the words of Jesus seemed to have borne fruit immediately. So also when he said, "A prophet hath no honor in his own country," he employed a proverb which originated in the treatment that the Jews had accorded their own prophets. In the Sermon on the Mount also we find many proverbial fragments which were in current use among the people, and were readily understood by them. The difficult saying, "Permit me first to go and bury my father," probably did not refer to actual burial, but rather to the caring for one's parents in their declining years, and on this occasion was evidently employed as a mere pretext for delaying to follow Christ. And finally, the simile of the camel and the needle's eye was a common oriental saying to describe that which was impossible.

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**The Temple Not Made with Hands.**

The interpretation of Jesus' remarkable saying in John 2:19, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" is discussed by Professor Vernon Bartlet in the *Expository Times* for December. He finds the key to the meaning of Jesus' saying in Mark 14:58. The idea of this saying is that of the substitution of a new and true Israel, Messiah's Ecclesia, for the material shrine, to which Judaism then tended to confine God's special presence; cf. also 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5. This thought is thoroughly appropriate to the situation in the second chapter of John, and to Jesus' words, "Dissolve (by abuse) this shrine, and in three days I will raise it up in a new and nobler form." In this claim Jesus' hearers recognized the fulfilment of Hos. 6:1 f. The knowledge of men attributed to Jesus (2:24, 25) was not absolute, but was acquired by experience; it did not relate to human nature in general but rather to the actual thoughts and feelings of individuals with whom Jesus met and had to deal. The whole passage

explains that Jesus read the superficial nature of the belief in him at this time, and would not commit himself to these people for their co-operation in working out his messianic vocation, because they were accepting him as Messiah without the necessary radical change of conception as to the essential nature of the kingdom which Jesus came to inaugurate.

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#### **Hebrew Ideals as Exhibited in the Stories of the Patriarchs.**

An admirable statement of the earlier religious and ethical ideals of the Hebrew people is given in Mr. Strachan's volume, *Hebrew Ideals*, in the series of "Handbooks for Bible Classes." The narratives in Genesis are to a large extent transcripts from a vivid oral tradition, the author says. In times when there was no written word in Israel, tradition was the medium of religious instruction in Hebrew homes. The Divine Spirit made the recital of the sacred stories the means of arousing in the hearts of the young a living interest in the ancestral faith. The old traditions were necessarily recast and amplified again and again in accordance with the advancing requirements of successive ages. When a sacred writer undertook to collect these traditions and weave them into a continuous narrative, he was animated, not by an antiquarian or æsthetic, but by a religious, motive. The moral and spiritual interest predominated in his mind. As a man of prophetic spirit, mastered by great religious convictions, he sought to give his people spiritual light and leading by exhibiting to them a divine pattern of faith and duty; and for this purpose he used the sacred traditions which lay ready to his hand, modifying and supplementing them according to his prophetic principles. Genesis contains not merely the roots, but the flowers and fruits, of Hebrew faith. The patriarchs are not inferior to the prophets of the eighth century B. C. in purity of religious insight and inward spiritual piety.

Sacred history was prophecy teaching by example. The patriarchal stories are a series of character-studies, an unsurpassed gallery of portraits, and the study of character is the primary task of the reader as of the writer. Truth is made most attractive when it is embodied in concrete forms. The word must be made flesh, and dwell among men. It is not beautiful abstractions, but good and true men and women, warm and pulsing with humanity, that win our affections. They allure us to whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. In Genesis there is no need for moralizing or appealing or